

Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science

Volume 11 | Annual Issue

Article 31

1903

Remarkable Occurrence of Aurichalcite

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Recommended Citation

Keyes, Charles R. (1903) "Remarkable Occurrence of Aurichalcite," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 11(1), 253-253.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol11/iss1/31>

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REMARKABLE OCCURRENCE OF AURICHALCITE.

BY CHARLES R. KEYES.

Good aurichalcites are among the rarer specimens in mineral collections. The peculiar feathery habit of crystallization makes the mineral difficult to handle and difficult to preserve even after being collected.

Aurichalcite is a basic carbonate of zinc and copper having, according to Penfield, a chemical formula which should be written $2(\text{Zn}, \text{Cu})\text{Co}_3 \cdot 3(\text{Zn}, \text{Cu})(\text{OH}_2)$.

The aurichalcite which is here exhibited is from the Graphic Zinc Mines in the Magdalena mountains, in central New Mexico. The noteworthy feature of the occurrence is that the delicate plumose clusters of crystals are preserved by clear crystalline calcite. On this account the rarer mineral is perfectly preserved and is easily handled without danger of destruction.

The single occurrence known in the Graphic mines is of indescribable beauty. A crystal grotto ten or a dozen feet in diameter is entirely lined with exquisite and delicately tinted aurichalcite which is again covered by a thin layer of calcite one-quarter to one-half inch in thickness made up of very perfectly and brightly faceted crystals closely grown together.

Some of the showiest specimens obtained were four to five times the size of a man's head.